

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee's Operations, Oversight, and Credit Subcommittee, voted for the Agriculture Committee's Farm Bill proposal, which was approved on a bipartisan vote of 35-11.

"Agriculture is critical to America's economic security, energy security, and national security," Fortenberry said. "A new farm bill is imperative for the future of agriculture and rural America. This proposal charts a new way forward for America's farmers and ranchers while respecting the federal government's severe budgetary constraints. While the bill is not perfect, it provides adequate protection options for farmers, supports young and beginning farmers, and embraces new market opportunities domestically and internationally."

Three Fortenberry initiatives were included in the committee's legislation. Fortenberry's Beginning Farmers amendment will modify and build upon existing farm programs to help overcome the steep financial burdens for new farmers as they establish agricultural businesses. Another amendment provides microloans to small, beginning, and veteran farmers seeking farm credit. Currently, the average age of the American farmer is 56 years old.

Fortenberry also sponsored an amendment to enhance the Farmers Market and Local Foods Promotion Program, an effort that increases market opportunities for small and mid-sized farms and strengthens local food systems.

During the committee markup, Fortenberry also raised the importance of several policy considerations, including farm payment limitations, rural housing programs, and the protection of lands for conservation purposes.

"We need to pass a farm bill prior to its expiration at the end of September. I look forward to continuing this robust debate about our country's agricultural future on the House floor in the coming weeks."

###